

VZCZCXR09363
OO RUEHDU RUEHMR RUEHBN
DE RUEHLU #0254 0911811
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 311811Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY LUANDA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4699
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 000254

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2013

TAGS: AO PREL ZI

SUBJECT: ANGOLA CONCERNED ABOUT POTENTIAL FOR VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE, ESPECIALLY FROM MDC

REF: STATE 32645

Classified By: Ambassador Dan Mozena for Reasons 1.5 (b&d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In response to March 31 demarche (reftel), Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge Chicoti told Ambassador Mozena he would pass U.S. concerns over the potential for violence in Zimbabwe directly to President Dos Santos. He added that Angola shares these concerns, especially if Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters take to the streets in unauthorized demonstrations. Chicoti said Angola is closely monitoring the situation on the ground and that all indications, so far, point to a Mugabe win in the presidential elections. He cautioned that if Mugabe loses to Tsvangirai, there could be civil war in Zimbabwe, since Mugabe would be a "wounded lion," with no exit strategy to provide him an adequate pension, rights, or protection. When pressed about how Angola would react to an outbreak of violence in Zimbabwe, Chicoti said Angola would consider bringing the issue before the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ for Politics, Defense, and Security (which Angola chairs) or the African Union. Discounting the possibility that Mugabe could lose the presidential election, Chicoti was most concerned that MDC supporters might take to the streets to protest against a Mugabe victory. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Vice Minister Chicoti said Angola shares our concerns over the potential for violence in Zimbabwe, regardless of the outcome of the presidential elections. He undertook to raise our concerns directly with President Dos Santos.

¶3. (C) According to Chicoti, the GRA is closely monitoring the situation in Zimbabwe and receiving hourly updates that indicate calm, so far, prevailing across the country. Chicoti said early returns showed President Mugabe was winning the election, but an update passed to him during our meeting showed the MDC pulling even as returns continue to come in.

¶4. (C) Chicoti said if Mugabe loses the election to Tsvangirai, there could be civil war in Zimbabwe. He said

SIPDIS
too many members of the military and ordinary Zimbabweans view Mugabe as a freedom fighter who led their country to independence. He said Mugabe has no exit strategy and an electoral defeat would leave him without sufficient money, rights, or protections. Chicoti said the most likely (and best) outcome would be an electoral victory by Mugabe who would then choose a successor and retire after only one or two years more in office. Chicoti said Mugabe's time has passed and that once re-elected, he (Mugabe) must move quickly to pass power to a new generation

¶5. (C) If violence breaks out in Zimbabwe, Chicoti said he thinks it more likely that such violence would be started by MDC supporters who might take to the streets in rejection of

a ZANU-PF victory. He agreed with the Ambassador's observation that statements by Zimbabwean defense leaders that they would accept only Mugabe as president were anti-democratic and could contribute to violence. Should violence occur, the Vice Minister said Angola would consider how to present the issue to the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense, and Security, which Angola chairs, or with the African Union.

6 (C) Speaking broadly about the situation in Zimbabwe, Chicoti said Angolans and Africans in general blame the West for many of Zimbabwe's current problems, though acknowledging that Mugabe has made mistakes too. Chicoti said if the West (Chicoti mentioned MDC financial support from the British and Dutch intelligence services) could bring "regime change" to Zimbabwe then "... it could happen any time with any country," a prospect that has rallied widespread African support for Mugabe.

¶7. (C) Comment: Chicoti seemed confident Mugabe will win reelection, work to appoint a successor, and then gracefully depart on his own terms. He dismissed the Ambassador's suggestion that the will of the Zimbabwean people might return a different result. The GRA does appear genuinely concerned over the possibility of violence in Zimbabwe, though how and whether Angola would attempt to engage in any meaningful way to address such violence is unclear.

MOZENA